

## Aurelio Voltaire Excerpts

### Preview the Text

- We will be “Text Coding” the reading for our first read.
  - ★ (Star): Key idea or main point
  - ? (Question Mark): Something you found confusing or want to discuss
  - → (Arrow): Connection to something you have learned before
  - ! (Exclamation Point): Surprising or interesting fact

### **Aurelio Voltaire (1694-1778)**

**Aurelio Voltaire was a French Enlightenment philosopher, writer, and historian. Some of his most famous works promoted religious tolerance. He advocated for rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.**

**Document 1** Source: Aurelio Voltaire, “On Tolerance” - From A Treatise on Tolerance published 1763

You don’t need to be an expert speaker or artist to see that Christians should **tolerate** each other. But I’m going further: I believe we should see everyone as our brothers and sisters, regardless of their background. What about people from different cultures and religions, like Turks, Chinese, Jews, or people from Siam? Yes, they are all our siblings because we all come from the same God.

Even if they don’t agree with us and think we’re wrong, I would tell them they are mistaken. Imagine saying to a proud religious leader from Islam or Buddhism:

“This tiny planet we live on is just a small part of the vast universe, and humans are tiny in comparison. It’s like one tiny ant telling another, ‘Listen to me, because the God of this universe has told me that my ant-hill is the only one He cares about, while all other ants are condemned for eternity.’ This idea is clearly absurd.”

*Published 1763*

**Tolerate:** allow the existence, occurrence, or practice of without interference.

**Condemned:** Declared to be reprehensible, wrong, or evil

**Document 2** Source: US Constitution: First Amendment, Written in 1787

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or **abridging** the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to **petition** the Government for a redress (correction) of **grievances**.

*Written 1787*

**Abridging:** To restrict, limit, or curtail the right to express one's opinions and ideas without interference

**Petition:** A formal written request, typically one signed by many people, appealing to authority with respect to a particular cause.

**Grievances:** Refers to complaints or concerns that citizens have with the government, which they have the right to express and seek redress for through petitioning

**Document 3** Source: Supreme Court Justice Stevens delivering the opinion of the Court on *Wallace v Jaffree* (1985)

*Wallace v Jaffree* was a Supreme Court Case deciding on the issue of silent prayer in public schools. The Court found that the law created in Alabama violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

"We must therefore, conclude that the **Alabama Legislature** intended to change the existing law... for the sole purpose of expressing the State's endorsement (support) of prayer activities for one minute at the beginning of each school day. The addition of "or voluntary prayer" indicates that the State intended to characterize prayer as a favored practice. Such endorsement (support) is not consistent with the established principle that the government must pursue a course of complete neutrality toward religion."

-Supreme Court Justice John P. Stevens (1985)

**Alabama Legislature:** The Alabama Legislature is the state government's legislative branch, which makes laws for Alabama. It's made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives.